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ART. I. — *Greece under the Romans: A Historical View of the Condition of the Greek Nation, from the Time of its Conquest by the Romans until the Extinction of the Roman Empire in the East.* By GEORGE FINLAY, K. R. G. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons. 1844. 8vo. pp. 554.

THE period of Grecian history embraced in the work before us extends from one hundred and forty-six years before Christ to the year 717 of our era. It is full of interest, though of an interest widely different from that which belongs to the classical ages of Hellenic civilization. Greece had run her brilliant career. In every species of literature, in every department of art, in all the regions of æsthetic beauty, she had left monuments of her genius which the world has not since been able to rival. The principles of political science had been richly illustrated by the various experiences of her numerous and widely contrasted polities. That peculiar kind of confederation which combines under one energetic government a cluster of republics, each sovereign in some respects, and in others constituting only a part of the united sovereignty, like the government of the United States of America, alone has no exact parallel in the political history of the Grecian republics. It is not without reason, therefore, that students of politics have resorted to Grecian history to trace the workings of institutions and principles, as men observe in small models the operations of wheels and springs combined in mechanical inventions.

But the free action of the Greek political life ceased with

the Roman conquest. From that moment, the fair land of ancient civilization ceased to have an independent existence, and was incorporated into the vast body of the martial empire of Rome. Though Greece had foolishly exhausted her resources and energies in civil wars, her genius was pre-eminently for the arts of peace. The quick sense of the beautiful, the rapid invention, the intuitive elegance of imagination, which distinguished the leading races, especially the Ionian, led them to engage with passionate enthusiasm in those pursuits which adorn and exalt human life, rather than in the brutalizing and bloody works of war; and while Rome stands foremost among the military nations that have placed their chief glory in conquests, the name of Greece is for ever identified with all that is most beautiful in imagination, most thrilling in eloquence, most harmonious and entrancing in poetry. Which species of fame is most worthy the ambition of beings endowed with the immortal energies of reason and imagination?

This work of Mr. Finlay goes over, in part, the same ground that Gibbon has occupied in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; but the subject handled here was only an incident to Gibbon's stupendous undertaking, as Greece was only a small province of the world-embracing empire of Rome. In many respects, therefore, Mr. Finlay has gone beyond the researches of Gibbon, inasmuch as his labors come within a narrower range. He has carefully studied and thoroughly mastered all the original authorities upon which a satisfactory history of such a period must necessarily be constructed, and the fruits of modern researches that come in as useful subsidiary aids. His work is, therefore, learned and profound. It throws a flood of light upon an important though obscure portion of Grecian history, which has been but little attended to by scholars, because it is not adorned by the splendors of poetry and eloquence which shed an undying glory over the great ages of Greece. Mr. Finlay's style has none of the elaborate elegance and the stately historic march of Gibbon's; it is sometimes rugged and uncouth; but it is always significant and clear. He is so well informed upon all the details of his subject, his views are so distinct and so thoroughly reasoned out, that the language is never vague, the meaning never involved, the sentences never merely half

significant, through the imperfect knowledge of the writer. In the essential requisites of fidelity, accuracy, and learning, Mr. Finlay bears a favorable comparison with any historical writer of our day ; but in the literary merits of composition, in artistic beauty of form, he is greatly inferior to many. Mr. Finlay is known to the world as a distinguished Philhellene ; a friend of Greece in her hour of affliction, sharing with our gallant countryman, Dr. Howe, and others, in the perils and the glory of her brave resistance to the barbarian. He has long resided in that country, we believe, and identified his interests with her dubious fortunes under the existing government ; and, besides the present work, he has written on subjects of a classical and antiquarian character ; his work possesses, therefore, almost the authority and interest of one written by a native of the country.

There are circumstances in the character of the Greek nation which attach a peculiar interest to every period of its history. The Greeks of the present day are the only unquestionable representatives of antiquity. Though Greece fell under the military power of Rome, many of her peculiar institutions remained untouched by the conquerors, and her population continued to a great extent homogeneous and unmixed ; and though, at the downfall of the Byzantine empire, Greece was overrun and trampled under foot by Asiatic barbarians, she still preserved her language and the consciousness of her illustrious descent. Among her mountain fastnesses, while her plains were held by the dark and turbaned infidel, a heroic race, resembling the warriors of Homeric song, maintained their independence, and chanted their deeds of daring in strains that do no discredit to their inherited genius. Thus the Hellenic race was preserved ; and when the hour struck which was to see the foreign yoke thrown off, and the oppressor's power shattered and dispersed for ever, the thrilling recollections of old, uttered in words that have resounded over Greece since the days of Homer, strengthened the heart and nerved the arm with the exalting consciousness that Marathon and Thermopylæ were to them no themes of schoolboy learning, kindling a factitious enthusiasm, but immortal names in their own history, — scenes of fame in which their own great ancestors had acted, and which they, no unworthy sons of such ancestors, were bound to emulate. The period, therefore, illustrated by Mr. Finlay's

work is characterized not merely by a scientific or antiquarian relation to the general mass of our knowledge, but has important bearings upon the present condition of living men.

There is a feature in Mr. Finlay's method of treating his subject which gives to the result of his researches a special value ; he has investigated not merely the facts of history, so as to present an intelligible narrative, but has inquired into the causes of political phenomena, laying them open to the light of modern science in such a manner, that the reader sees how the vices of administration worked out their inevitable consequences in the decline of physical prosperity, and in the gradual disorganization of the elements which constitute the necessary conditions of a progressive national existence. In other words, Mr. Finlay understands the principles of political economy, and has applied them skilfully to the explanation of the facts in his narrative.

The old relations of Greece with the rest of the world were greatly modified by the conquests of Alexander. Like other ancient warriors, he set out in his career without the least shadow of right to justify his invasion of remote and unoffending nations ; but unlike other ancient warriors, he sought to create a new and better era, by founding new cities, extending the commerce of the world, encouraging the arts, and establishing a great empire on enlightened political institutions. The teachings of his great master, Aristotle, had initiated him in the science of government, and now, when he attempted to consolidate his conquests, guided him into the path of wisdom, which no other ancient founder of an empire had had the sagacity to discern and to follow. The language and institutions of the Greeks were planted among the barbarians, but not forced upon them. The power and wealth of the monarchs who succeeded Alexander, and divided his empire, overbalanced the influence of the free states of Greece, and, by opening a more extended sphere of action and holding up to the view of the ambitious more glittering rewards, drew off from the small theatre of continental Greece a large proportion of her ablest men, and Alexandria became the capital of the civilized world. A more intimate intercourse with the Asiatic courts corrupted the simplicity of Grecian manners, the kings of Macedonia assailed the independence of the southern Grecian states, which it was found impossible to unite in their common de-

fence against the threatening danger, the Gauls invaded the country and inflicted on it heavy calamities, and the Greek colonies in Italy fell under the Roman arms. Thus the power of Greece rapidly declined, and her commercial influence received a fatal shock from the changes in the relations of states consequent upon the military achievements and political combinations of Alexander. "Alexandria and Rhodes," says Mr. Finlay, "soon occupied the position once held by Corinth and Athens." The transfer of the language and literature of Greece from their native abodes to splendid and luxurious foreign capitals wrought a great and unfavorable change upon its character. "That divine instinct," says our author, "which had been the charm and characteristic of its earlier age, never emigrated." In the free states of Greece, literature and art had been wrought into the daily life of the people ; they were part and parcel of the education of every citizen. And these peculiar circumstances gave to literary productions a simplicity and directness, and a truth to nature, which were in a great measure lost when the immediate pressure of a cultivated popular opinion was taken off from the genius of the writers ; and precisely this case occurred in the brilliant capitals of the East. The general corruption of morals was hastened to an inconceivable degree by suddenly bringing the treasures of the Persian empire, estimated by our author at between seventy and eighty millions sterling, into general circulation. "It is difficult to imagine," Mr. Finlay truly remarks, "a state of society more completely destitute of moral restraint than that in which the Asiatic Greeks lived. Public opinion was powerless to enforce even an outward respect for virtue ; military accomplishments, talents for civil administration, and literary eminence were the direct roads to distinction and wealth ; honesty and virtue were very secondary qualities. In all countries or societies where a class becomes predominant, a conventional character is formed, according to the exigencies of the case, as the standard of an honorable man ; and it is usually very different indeed from what is really necessary to constitute a virtuous, or even an honest citizen."

Such are some of the general causes of decline from the virtues of the ancient character of the Greeks ; and when these causes had brought forth their natural fruits, Rome, the great military nation, organized with a central power which

guided all the energies of the state and wielded them as by the will of one man, came into violent collision with degenerate, effeminate, divided, and disorganized Greece. The result of such an unequal conflict could not long remain doubtful. The wars with Rome excited no strong national feeling among the Greeks. The great body of the citizens saw no means of regaining tranquillity and reëstablishing the principles of justice except by submission to Rome. This feeling is strikingly shown by an expression so current in the mouths of the people, that, according to Polybius, it passed into a common proverb:—*Εἰ μὴ ταχέως ἀπωλόμεθα, οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθημεν*, —“If we had not quickly been lost, we should not have been saved.”*

For a time, the weight of subjugation to Rome was not severely felt by the Greeks. The Roman was a barbarian and a fighter from the beginning, and he never fairly laid aside the essential rudeness of his character. The moment he came in contact with the ingenious Greek, the natural superiority of intellectual abilities over the coarser character of the Roman manifested itself in a way which provoked the ill-humor of the Roman satirists, who tried to disguise the fact by calling the conquered Greeks the hardest names which their limited vocabulary could supply. But to such a degree was this a fact, that the Romans, when they became ambitious to have a literature of their own, had not wit enough to do much more than translate the literature of their subjects. Plautus and Terence translated the comic writers of Athens; Cicero translated Plato, and every other Greek philosopher he could lay his hands upon; and the only original invention they ever dared to claim was that of the satire, the poorest species of literature, since it consists mainly of invective against the persons and manners of the age, and has little or no general interest for the world at large.

The Romans made but one attempt to intermeddle with the municipal institutions and local administration of the Greeks; that was at the time of the conquest of Achaia; and so little luck had they in it, that they soon gave it up. “The local institutions,” says Mr. Finlay, “ultimately modified the Roman administration itself, and long before

* Mr. Finlay incorrectly translates it, “Unless we are quickly lost, we cannot be saved.” The past tense of the verbs makes this translation inadmissible.

the Roman empire ceased to exist, its political authority in the East was guided by the feelings of the Greeks, and its forms moulded according to Greek customs."

Mr. Finlay's first chapter embraces the period from the conquest of Greece to the establishment of Constantinople as the capital of the Roman empire ; that is, to A. D. 330. In this time occurred the Mithridatic war, which caused a partial revolt, particularly that of Athens, from the Roman power. Sylla found it no easy matter to break the spirit of these fiery democrats ; and when, after a long siege, the defence of the city had become hopeless, the Athenians sent a deputation to the Roman general to negotiate the terms of a surrender, and the orators began, after the ancient fashion, to talk about their ancestors and Marathon, Sylla pettishly answered, that " he had come to Athens to punish rebels, not to study history " ; and he was as good as his word. He carried the city by storm ; put most of the citizens to death ; allowed his soldiers to plunder the private houses ; and took great credit to himself, on the score of humanity, for not burning them all to the ground. The Piræus he utterly destroyed. It was a great misfortune to Greece, that Mithridates chose to make Greece the theatre of his war with Rome ; for Sylla's campaign wrought such havoc in the wealth and resources of Athens, that she never afterwards recovered either her commercial or political importance or her population. And yet her institutions did not, even after this terrible disaster, lose the whole of their vigor ; the laws and legal forms still existed, and the court of the Areopagus, according to Tacitus, even in the reign of Tiberius, resisted the attempts of Piso to corrupt the administration of justice.

The next infliction under which the much-suffering Greeks groaned was the terrible scourge of the Cilician pirates. There be water-rats as well as land-rats ; and the one almost always follows hard upon the other. The defenceless state of Greece, which was one of the consequences of her subjection to Rome, lured these sea-robbers from the Asiatic coast. The cities and temples of Greece, which contained the accumulated treasures of ages, fell an easy prey to these numerous and organized marauders, who rose to such a height of audacity and power that the supremacy of Rome herself was threatened. Pompey was intrusted with author-

ity more extensive than had ever before been granted to an individual, and an immense force was placed at his disposal, for the purpose of suppressing them. His success in this enterprise constitutes no small part of his renown in history. He captured ninety brazen-beaked ships and twenty thousand brazen-faced men ; and with these latter — promising materials to found a city with — he peopled a town which was called after him Pompeiopolis, or Pompey-town.

An interesting section of the first chapter is devoted to an examination into the nature of the Roman provincial administration in Greece. The whole subject is very ably handled, and a brief and intelligible account of the proconsular system is given. The fiscal administration of the Romans was, down to the time of Augustus, very much like that adopted by Napoleon ; that is to say, the Roman armies were supported by indiscriminately robbing every nation that fell under their power. This was all very well, as long as the money lasted ; but Augustus found the imperial pockets empty, and like an honest man, when he was convinced he could rob no more, he set about devising a system of universal taxation to replenish them. “ And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.” And now began a series of extortions, under a system of multiplied taxation, which exhausted the wealth of the world to fill up the measure of imperial luxury at the capital, and to enable a few bad men to amass fortunes the like of which the world has never since beheld, and to run a career of gigantic debaucheries for which the wrath of Heaven doomed the empire to a terrible retribution in after ages.

The severity of Roman taxation, the cruel measures adopted by Æmilius Paulus, Mummius, Sylla, Julius Cæsar, and Augustus, struck a series of fatal blows at the physical prosperity of Greece, and led to that decline in her population which is so remarkable a feature in the history of that period, and which gradually reduced the country to the condition forcibly and eloquently described by Frederic Jacobs in one of his occasional discourses. “ It is indeed true,” said that veteran scholar, in an oration before the Academy of Sciences at Munich, in 1808, “ that ancient Greece has disappeared, as it were, from the borders which once encompassed her free and intellectual inhabitants. The life of the most

excitable of all nations has died out. Their cities, once the centres of virtues unsurpassed, worthy dwelling-places of the gods, and rich gardens of every art, have sunk to dismal hamlets, in which a stunted and starveling race heedlessly build their huts upon the ruins of antiquity, without respecting, and generally without even remembering, the heroic age to which the stones themselves still bear witness. The ancient rivers, some yet called by their former names, steal mournfully through a desolated land ; the gods that once dwelt on their banks and in their grottos have vanished ; and the wondrous strains, which told the history of every fountain, hill, and woodland to the listening ear of a free and susceptible people, have died away." The simple and pathetic letter of Servius Sulpicius to Cicero will at once suggest itself to the memory of the classical reader. " On my return from Asia, as I was sailing from Ægina towards Megara, I began to contemplate the prospect of the countries around me : Ægina was behind me, Megara before me ; Piræus on the right, Corinth on the left ; all which towns, once famous and flourishing, now lie overturned and buried in their ruins. Upon this sight, I could not but think presently within myself, Alas ! how do we poor mortals fret and vex ourselves, if any of our friends happen to die or be killed, whose life is yet so short, when the carcasses of so many noble cities lie here exposed before me in one view."

So much of the ancient Greek spirit remained, even while the causes of national decline and degeneracy were in full operation, that the Romans found it expedient to occupy many of the strongest positions in the country with military colonies. Corinth, enthroned between two seas, and well suited to hold the country in check, was partially rebuilt by Julius Cæsar ; Augustus systematically reduced the power and influence of Athens and Sparta, and founded two new states, Patræ and Nicopolis, which he peopled with Roman soldiers, and filled up the lower ranks by a series of arbitrary and ruinous measures, compelling the inhabitants of the surrounding country to desert their ancient abodes, sacrificing property to an immense amount, and forcibly diverting the revenues of several already impoverished Grecian cities to the support of these military establishments. " The peculiar privileges," says Finlay, " conferred on the three Roman colonies of Corinth, Patræ, and Nicopolis, and the close connection in

which they were placed with the imperial government, enabled them to flourish for centuries amidst the general poverty which the despotic system of the Roman provincial administration spread over the rest of Greece."

So unfortunate Greece continued to be the object of the respect and jealousy of her Roman masters. Athens, reduced as she was, stood at the head of the literary world. Educated Romans resorted to her, to receive from her teachers the last polish of letters and art. Wealthy Roman citizens employed learned Greeks as private tutors in their families, and a knowledge of the Greek language was deemed an indispensable requisite to a polite education. In short, Greek was the fashion, the rage, in the upper circles of Roman society. Roman writers frequently aspired to the honors of authorship in the Greek language, even as early as the time of Cicero ; that great orator himself took infinite pains to accomplish himself in Greek, and was ambitious to have the history of his consulship transmitted to posterity in that language. He sent his son to Athens, and placed him under the charge of the most famous rhetoricians and philosophers of the age. The correspondence between the illustrious Roman and his son exhibits the literary influence of Greece in a most striking and interesting light, and does infinitely more honor to the right feeling and moral character of the parties concerned than the letters of a celebrated modern, Chesterfield, in a case almost parallel, directing minutely and step by step the education of one who was destined to public life in a Christian country.

The fortunes of Greece changed considerably between the reign of Augustus and that of Caracalla. The monster Nero had some visitings of civility and humanity ; and when the Greeks, having learned the arts of courtiership and dissimulation, conferred on him the musical crown at the Olympic Games, he was so much gratified by their flattery that he exempted them from tribute. This immunity, however, lasted but a short time ; for the excellent Vespasian, by way of conveniently settling the disputes which immediately broke out between the states as to the mode of collecting their municipal taxes, and not having, like the ingenious Nero, an ear for music, unscrupulously took away the privilege which that amiable fiddler had granted. The Emperor Hadrian was a real benefactor to Greece. His services to the country, and

the lasting consequences which flowed from them, are well summed up in the following extract.

“Hadrian treated Greece with peculiar favor. He opened a new line of policy to the sovereigns of Rome, and avowed the determination of reforming the institutions of the Romans, and adapting his government to the altered state of society in the empire. He perceived that the central government was weakening its power, and diminishing its resources, by acts of injustice, which rendered property everywhere insecure. To remedy the evils in the dispensation of the laws, he published his perpetual edict, which certainly exercised a favorable influence on the condition of the inhabitants of the provinces. It laid the foundation of that regular and systematic administration of justice in the Roman empire, which gradually absorbed all the local judicatures of the Greeks, and, by forming a numerous and well educated society of lawyers, guided by uniform rules, raised up a partial barrier against arbitrary power. In order to lighten the weight of taxation, Hadrian abandoned all the arrears of taxes accumulated in preceding years.* His general system of administrative reforms was pursued by the Antonines, and perfected by the edict of Caracalla, which conferred the rank of Roman citizens on all the free inhabitants of the empire. Hadrian certainly deserves the merit of having first seen the necessity of securing the imperial government, by effacing the badges of servitude from the provincials, and connecting the interests of the majority of the landed proprietors, throughout the Roman empire, with the existence of the imperial administration. He was the first who laid aside the prejudices of a Roman, and secured to the provincials that legal rank in the constitution of the empire, which placed their rights on a level with those of Roman citizens.

“Hadrian, from personal taste, cultivated Greek literature, and admired Grecian art. He left traces of his love of improvement in every portion of the empire, through which he kept constantly travelling; but Greece, and especially Attica, received an extraordinary share of the imperial favor. It is difficult to estimate how far his conduct immediately affected the general well-being of the population, or to point out the precise manner of its operation on society; but it is evident, that the impulse given to improvement by his example and his administration produced a slight tendency to ameliorate the condition of the Greeks. Greece had sunk to its lowest state of poverty and depopulation under the financial oppression of the Flavian family, and it enjoyed the advantage of good government under Hadrian. The

* SPARTIANUS, in *Adriano*, p. 10.

extraordinary improvements, which the Roman emperors might have effected in the empire, by a judicious employment of the public revenues, may be estimated from the immense public works executed by Hadrian. At Athens, he completed the temple of Jupiter Olympius, which had been commenced by Pisistratus, and of which sixteen columns still exist to astonish the spectator by their size and beauty. He built temples to Juno and to Jupiter Panhellenius, and ornamented the city by a magnificent pantheon, library, and gymnasium. He commenced an aqueduct to convey an abundant stream of water from Cephisia, which was completed by Antonius. At Megara, he rebuilt the temple of Apollo. He constructed an aqueduct which conveyed the waters of the lake Styμφalus to Corinth, and he erected new baths in that city. But the surest proof that his improvements were directed by a judicious spirit is to be found in his attention to the roads. Nothing could tend more to advance the prosperity of this mountainous country, than removing the difficulties of intercourse between its various provinces ; for there is no spot where the expense of transport presents a greater barrier to trade. He rendered the road from Northern Greece to the Peloponnesus by the Scironian rocks easy and commodious for wheeled carriages. Great, however, as these improvements were, he conferred one still greater on the Greeks, as a nation, by commencing the task of moulding their various local customs and laws into one general system, founded on the basis of the Roman jurisprudence ;* and while ingrafting the law of the Romans on the stock of society in Greece, he did not seek to destroy the municipal institutions of the people. The policy of Hadrian, in raising the Greeks to an equality of civil rights with the Romans, gave an administrative sanction to whatever remained of the Macedonian institutions throughout the East ; and as soon as the edict of Caracalla had conferred on all the subjects of the empire the rights of Roman citizenship, the Greeks became, in reality, the dominant people in the eastern portion of the Roman empire, and Greek institutions ultimately obtained the supremacy." — pp. 71 – 74.

The Emperors Antoninus and Marcus Aurelius, and that accomplished citizen, Herodes Atticus, whose taste in art and letters is celebrated in the history of the times, and whose public munificence rivalled that of Hadrian himself, did much towards the restoration of Greece, so far as a subject province could be restored, to her former præeminence

* SPANHEIM, *Orbis Romanus*, 393.

in literature, science, and art. But after the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Greece seems to have been almost forgotten, amidst the wars in which the Roman government was perpetually engaged. Sunk in obscurity, and taking an insignificant part in the affairs of the empire, she still retained the shadow of her ancient political institutions and the reminiscences of her ancient renown. The Amphictyonic Council held its assemblies ; the four great games were still celebrated ; the court of the Areopagus was still the last resort of justice in Athens ; and the Spartan Gerontia retained at least the form of its ancient power, several centuries after the Roman conquest. Under these circumstances, and with the original and striking differences of character between the Greek and the Roman, the two races always repelled each other. No intimate union, no blending into one people, ever did or could take place.

Constantine made great and important changes in the constitution of the empire. He rendered the military element less prominent as a characteristic of the administration, remodelled the executive and the army, transferred the seat of government to a new capital, and established a new religion. He made the emperor the centre of the civil government, and devised what in modern times has been called a "bureaucracy," that the business of the administration might be carried on with a mechanical precision. But he failed to establish a well regulated system of responsibility among the servants of the state. In fact, he moulded his government into a caste, with interests directly opposed to those of the great mass of the people. "In his desire to save the world from anarchy," says our author, "he created that struggle between the administration and the governed, which has ever since existed, either actively or passively, in every country which has inherited the monarchical principle of imperial Rome ; and the problem of combining efficient administration with constant responsibility seems, in these states, still unsolved."

The legal reforms introduced by Constantine were extensive, and gave the most striking evidence of his greatness ; while the fiscal measures which he adopted, aiming "to transfer the whole circulating medium annually into the coffers of the state," were so erroneous in principle and so fatal in their consequences, that they prevented his salutary

legislation from doing more than to prolong the agony of the body politic, which was now advancing by a slow consumption to its dissolution. The interests of the Greeks were unfavorably affected by the reforms of Constantine. The empire was so divided, that the Greeks, constituting but a part of the population in each of the five governments into which the prefecture of the Orient was divided, lost the influence which their common language and manners and their national unity would otherwise have given them ; and thus the fortunes of Greece and the Greeks were more intimately blended with those of the declining empire. The gradual operation of these and other causes of national disorders is traced out by Mr. Finlay in a masterly style ; but there is no space to dwell upon them here.

One of the most interesting sections in the book is that in which is discussed the influence of Christianity upon the social condition of the Greeks. We copy a part of it, both for the intrinsic importance of the subject, and to show the manner in which it is handled by Mr. Finlay.

“ The steady progress which Christianity made against paganism, and the deep impression it produced on the middling classes of society, and on the votaries of philosophy, are certainly wonderful, when the weight of prejudice, the wealth of the temples, the pride of the schoolmen, and the influence of college endowments are taken into consideration. Throughout the East, the educated Greeks, from a peculiar disposition of mind, were easily led to grant an attentive hearing to the promulgators of new doctrines and systems. Even at Athens, Paul was listened to with great respect by many of the philosophers ; and after his public oration to the Athenians at the Areopagus, some said, ‘ We will hear thee again of this matter.’ A belief, that the principle of unity, both in politics and religion, must, from its simplicity and truth, lead to perfection, was an error of the human mind extremely prevalent at the time that Christianity was first preached. That one according spirit might be traced in the universe, and that there was one God, the Father of all, was a very prevalent doctrine. This tendency towards despotism in politics, and deism in religion, is a feature of the human mind which continually reappears in certain conditions of society and corruptions of civilization. At the same time, a very general dissatisfaction was felt at these conclusions ; and the desire of establishing the principle of man’s responsibility, and his connection with another state of existence, seemed hardly compatible with the unity of the divine essence adored by the philosophers.

“Under these circumstances, Christianity could not fail of making numerous converts. It boldly announced the full bearing of truths, of which the Greek philosophers had only afforded a dim glimpse ; and it distinctly contradicted many of the favorite dreams of the national, but falling, faith of Greece. It required either to be rejected or adopted. Among the Greeks, therefore, Christianity met everywhere with a curious and attentive audience. The feelings of the public mind were dormant ; Christianity opened the sources of eloquence, and revived the influence of popular opinion. From the moment a people, in the state of intellectual civilization in which the Greeks were, could listen to the preachers, it was certain they would adopt the religion. They might alter, modify, or corrupt it, but it was impossible that they should reject it. The existence of an assembly, in which the dearest interests of all human beings were expounded and discussed in the language of truth, and with the most earnest expressions of persuasion, must have lent an irresistible charm to the investigation of the new doctrine, among a people possessing the institutions and feelings of the Greeks. Sincerity, truth, and a desire to persuade others, will soon create eloquence where numbers are gathered together. Christianity revived oratory, and with oratory it awakened many of the national characteristics which had slept for ages. The discussions of Christianity gave also new vigor to the communal and municipal institutions, as it improved the intellectual qualities of the people.

“The demoralization of society prevalent throughout the world has been noticed, and its injurious effect on the position of the Greek females must have long been seriously felt by every Grecian mother. The educated females in Greece, therefore, naturally welcomed the pure morality of the Gospel without hesitation, and to their exertions the rapid conversion of the middling orders must in some degree be attributed. Female influence must not be overlooked, if we would form a just estimate of the change produced in society by the conversion of the Greeks to Christianity.” — pp. 142 – 144.

Mr. Finlay proceeds to describe in detail the early organization of the church, and the gradual formation of the Greek hierarchy ; and in a separate section exhibits the steps by which the orthodox church became identified with the Greek nation.

When the Roman empire was divided into two independent states, the Eastern and the Western, under Arcadius and Honorius, that great political revolution necessarily gave a new impulse to the nationality of the Greeks, by connect-

ing them more closely with the Eastern sovereigns, and by extending the use of the Greek language, even to the imperial court. The organization of the Christian church and the Greek municipal institutions now began to exercise a strong and direct influence upon the imperial administration itself. The learning of the nation was turned to the discussion of theological subjects; and a body of Greek theological literature was created, important for its bearings upon the early history of the church, and interesting as an exhibition of the elasticity of the Hellenic genius and language.

“The power of the clergy,” says our author, “originally resting on a more popular and purer basis than that of the law, became at last so great, that it suffered the inevitable corruption of all irresponsible authority intrusted to humanity. The power of the bishops equalled that of the provincial governors in weight, and was not under the constant control of the imperial administration. To gain such a position, intrigue, simony, and popular sedition were often employed. Supported by the people, a bishop ventured to resist the emperor himself; supported by the emperor and the people, he ventured even to neglect the principles of Christianity. Theophilus, the patriarch of Alexandria, even dared to ordain the Platonic philosopher, Synesius, bishop of Ptolemais, in Cyrenaica, before he believed in the resurrection.*” — pp. 179, 180.

This great power of the clergy is explained in part by the fact, that the Greek was the language of the Eastern church from the moment of its connection with the government, while all legal business was transacted in the Latin until after the reign of Justinian. Among the Greek population of the East, this important fact could not fail to place the priesthood at a commanding height above the civilians; as language is the one great means of swaying the popular mind.

Between the death of Arcadius and the accession of Justinian, six emperors occupied the throne, their united reigns covering a period of one hundred and twenty years, from A. D. 408 to A. D. 527. It was a period of almost unlimited despotism, held in check only by the danger of invasion and by the influence of the clergy over the body of the people. The senate of Constantinople gave some degree of stability to the imperial policy, but was so dependent up-

* SHARPE'S *Egypt under the Romans*, 192.

on the emperor, and usually so servile, that, except by the force of the general maxims of administration which its existence through a series of years established, it had but little power to curb the arbitrary will of the sovereign. The fact, that these emperors ascended the throne from private stations, and had reached a mature age before they arrived at the imperial purple, brought their administrations, it is true, more under the control of the public opinion than could naturally have been expected from the prevalent tyrannical maxims, which were formally received for the greater part of the period we are now considering ; and while the regular action of the government and the strengthening influence of popular opinion were conspiring to prolong the Byzantine empire, the Western fell in pieces.

The state of civilization and the influence of national manners among the Greek population suggest very interesting topics of inquiry. The following remarks upon literature and the fine arts are as just as they are well expressed ; and the facts accompanying them possess much interest.

“ The same genius which inspires poetry is necessary to excellence in the fine arts ; yet, as these are more mechanical in their execution, good taste may be long retained, after inspiration has entirely ceased, by the mere effect of imitating good models. The very constitution of society seemed to forbid the existence of genius. In order to produce the highest degree of excellence in works of literature and art, it seems absolutely necessary that the author and the public should participate in some common feelings of admiration for simplicity, beauty, and sublimity. When the condition of society places the patron of works of genius in a totally different rank of life from their authors, and renders the criticisms of a small and exclusive circle of individuals the law in literature and art, then an artificial taste must be studied, in order to secure the applause of those who alone possess the means of rewarding the merit of which they approve. The very fact, that this taste, which the author or the artist is called upon to gratify, is to him more a task of artificial study than a creation of natural feeling, must, of itself, produce a tendency to exaggeration or mannerism. There is nothing in the range of human affairs so completely democratic as taste. Demosthenes spoke to the crowd ; Phidias worked for the people.

“ Christianity engaged in direct war with the arts. The Greeks had united painting, sculpture, and architecture, in such a way, that their temples formed a harmonious illustration of the

beauties of the fine arts. The finest temples were museums of paganism, and, consequently, Christianity repudiated all connection with this class of buildings until it had disfigured and degraded them. The courts of judicature, the basilics, not the temples, were chosen as the models of Christian churches, and the adoption of the ideal beauty of ancient sculpture was treated with contempt. The earlier Fathers of the church wished to represent our Saviour as unlike the types of the pagan divinities as possible.

“ Works of art gradually lost their value as creations of the mind ; and their destruction commenced, whenever the material of which they were composed was of great value, or happened to be wanted for some other purpose more useful in the opinion of the possessor. The Theodosian Code contains many laws against the destruction of works of ancient art and the plundering of tombs. The Christian religion, when it deprived the temples and the statues of a religious sanction, permitted the avaricious to destroy them in order to appropriate the materials ; and, when all reverence for antiquity was effaced, it became a profitable, though disgraceful occupation, to ransack the pagan tombs for the ornaments which they contained. The clergy of the new religion demanded the construction of new churches ; and the desecrated buildings, falling into ruins, supplied materials more easily than the quarries.

“ Many of the celebrated works of art, which had been transported to Constantinople at its foundation, were destroyed in the numerous conflagrations to which that city was always liable. The celebrated statues of the Muses perished in the time of Arcadius. The fashion of erecting statues had not become obsolete, though statuary and sculpture had sunk in the general decline of taste ; and the vanity of the ambitious was more gratified by the costliness of the material, than by the beauty of the workmanship. A silver statue of the Empress Eudocia, placed on a column of porphyry, excited so greatly the indignation of John Chrysostom, that he indulged in the most violent invectives against the empress. His virulence compelled the government to exile him from the patriarchal chair. Many valuable Grecian works of bronze were melted down, in order to form a colossal statue of the Emperor Anastasius, which was placed on a lofty column to adorn the capital. Others of gold and silver may have augmented the sums which he laid up in the public treasury. Still it is unquestionable, that a taste for painting had not entirely ceased among the educated and wealthy classes. Mosaics and engraved gems were fashionable luxuries ; but the numbers of the patrons of art had decreased in the general pov-

erty, and the prejudices of the Christians had greatly restricted its range." — pp. 225 – 228.

The reign of Justinian is a prominent point in the history of the Eastern empire. "The unerring instinct of mankind," says Mr. Finlay truly, "has fixed on this period as one of the greatest eras in man's annals." It was distinguished by the achievements of Belisarius, the influence of Theodora, and, above all, by the legislation of the emperor, through which the destinies of the whole civilized world have been deeply affected.

"The changes of centuries passed in rapid succession before the eyes of one generation. The life of Belisarius, either in its reality or its romantic form, has typified his age. In his early youth, the world was populous and wealthy, the empire rich and powerful. He conquered extensive realms and mighty nations, and led kings captive to the footstool of Justinian, the lawgiver of civilization. Old age arrived; Belisarius sank into the grave, suspected and impoverished by his feeble and ungrateful master; and the world, from the banks of the Euphrates to those of the Tagus, presented the awful spectacle of famine, plague, and ruined cities, and of nations on the brink of extermination. The impression on the hearts of men was profound. Fragments of Gothic poetry, legends of Persian literature, and the fate of Belisarius himself, still indicate the eager attention with which this period was long regarded." — pp. 231, 232.

Such is our author's just and forcible delineation of a period when, to use his language in another place, "the frame of the ancient world was broken to pieces, and men long looked back with wonder and admiration at the fragments which remained, to prove the existence of a nobler race than their own."

Justinian ascended the throne A. D. 527. Two years later, the first edition of his Code was published; ten years later, in 537, the church of St. Sophia was dedicated in Constantinople. The consulate, the form of which had been retained from the ancient Roman republic, was abolished in 541. The last years of his reign were signalized by a remarkable series of earthquakes; one of which, that of A. D. 556, was so terrible, that the emperor did not venture to put on his crown, according to Agathias, for the space of forty days. It was towards the end of Justinian's life

that the Turks, destined afterwards, under the inspiration of fanaticism and the guidance of most able leaders, to change the face of the Oriental world, first became known to the Greeks. This important reign, marked by such diversity of incidents of the highest historical importance, and the starting-point of so many leading influences that have moulded the fortunes of the modern world, closed in the year 565. Mr. Finlay has exhibited its character with great thoroughness and ability; and the changes it wrought in the condition of the Greeks are pointed out with a satisfactory clearness and force. In a literary point of view, the most interesting circumstance of this time is the fact that the Greek became the language of the governing classes in the Eastern empire, and of the orthodox church, and thus ceased to possess a national, that is, an exclusively Hellenic, character.

“The fact,” says our author, in a very well written passage, a part of which only we can quote, “is easily explained by the poverty of the native Hellenes, and by the position of the ruling caste in the Roman empire. The highest offices in the court, in the civil administration, and in the orthodox church, were filled with this Greco-Roman class; and this class, sprung originally from the Macedonian conquerors of Asia, and now proud of the Roman name, repudiated all idea of Greek nationality; and, from its political views of Roman dominion, affected to treat Greek national distinctions as mere provincialism, at the very time it was acting under the impulse of Greek prejudices, both in the state and the church. The long existence of the new Platonic school of philosophy at Athens seems to have been connected with Hellenic national feelings, and Justinian was doubtless induced to put an end to it, and drive its last teachers into banishment, from his hostility to all independent institutions. This Greek nationality also indicates the natural cause of the dissatisfaction of the Athenian philosophers during their residence in Persia. They fled from the persecutions of Justinian to the court of Chosroes; but in spite of the favorable reception which they received, as enemies of the Roman emperor and of Christianity, after a few years they returned to their Greek countrymen. With this dispersion of the philosophers, the national literature of Greece ended.” — p. 338.

The fourth chapter investigates the condition of the Greeks from the death of Justinian, A. D. 565, to the death of Heraclius, A. D. 641. It opens with some general remarks on the connection between the history of the

Greek nation and the Roman empire during the reign of Justin the Second ; it then describes the national disorders during the reigns of Tiberius the Second and Maurice ; this is followed, among other topics, by a very interesting account of the changes effected in the state of the Greek population by the Slavonic establishments in Dalmatia, and finally by a description of the state of the native population of Greece. From the last we take the following passage.

“ It is impossible to trace with accuracy the effects of the depopulation of Greece, and of the poverty of the inhabitants. No description could exaggerate the sufferings of a country in a similar situation. The slave population, which had formerly labored for the wealthy, had now disappeared, and the free laborer had sunk into a serf. The uncultivated plains were traversed by armed bands of Slavonians, who gradually settled, in great numbers, in Thessaly and Macedonia. The cities of Greece ceased to receive the usual supplies of agricultural produce from the country, and even Thessalonica, with its fertile territory and abundant pastures, was dependent on foreign importation for relief from famine. The smaller cities, destitute of the same advantages of situation, would naturally be more exposed to depopulation, and sink more rapidly to decay. The roads, after the seizure of the local funds of the Greek cities by Justinian, were allowed to go to ruin, and the transport of provisions by land, in a country like Greece, became difficult. This neglect of the roads had always been a cause of the poverty and barbarism of the mountainous districts in the Roman empire, whenever it happened that they were not traversed by one of the great military lines of communication.

“ A complete opposition of feelings and interests began to separate the inhabitants of Greece, and the Greek population of Constantinople connected with the imperial administration, and this circumstance warrants us in fixing on the reign of Heraclius as the period at which the ancient existence of the Hellenic race terminates. It is vain to attempt to fix with accuracy the precise time at which the ancient usages were allowed, one by one, to expire ; for no change in social life, which is long in progress, can be considered as really accomplished, until the existence of a new order of things can be distinctly pointed out. National transitions can rarely be effected in one generation, and are often not completed in a century. But when the Byzantine writers, after the time of Heraclius, find it necessary to make mention of the Greeks of Hellas and Peloponnesus, they do so with feelings of aversion. This display of ill-will induces us to conjecture

that the fate of the Greek cities engaged in resisting the Slavonian invaders had not been very different from that of the imperial cities on the Adriatic, and that they had been compelled to develop a spirit of independence, which had caused a return of prosperity sufficient to awaken the envy of the Byzantine Greeks. The manner in which the Byzantine writers mention the dwellers in Greece, or *Helladikoi*, as they style them, in order to distinguish these Hellenes from the degenerate Romans, as they vainly term themselves, seems almost to imply envy as well as contempt. The term Hellenes was now either used to indicate the votaries of paganism, or was too closely associated with reminiscences of the glory of ancient Hellas, to be conferred on the rude Christian population of the Peloponnesus, by the educated in Constantinople." — pp. 435 – 437.

The fifth chapter embraces the period that extends from the death of Heraclius to the year 717, at which time the Roman empire in the East in effect terminated with the reign of Justinian the Second, the last emperor of the family of Heraclius. The series of Byzantine monarchs, properly so called, commenced with Leo the Isaurian. The Eastern empire had been reduced under the family of Heraclius to the bounds which it occupied for many centuries afterwards, under the name of the Byzantine. The connection between the court and the Greek nation became more consolidated than before, especially by a community of religious feelings.

The course of political changes in this period is ably traced; but we can only indicate them here in the most general manner. After the short, insignificant, and troubled rule of Constantine the Third and his brother Cleonas, Constantians the Second, Constantine the Fourth, Justinian the Second, and a succession of less important rulers, whose reigns were generally terminated by assassination or dethronement, filled up the confused history of this period. Constantians and Constantine were kept employed by the Mohammedans, now in the enthusiasm of their early career. Justinian the Second, ascending the throne at the age of sixteen, carried his tyranny to such a degree, that his subjects rebelled, cut off his nose, and banished him to Cherson. Ten years after, he returned at the head of a victorious army; but the loss of his nose had not been made up to him by the gain of wisdom. His subjects rose once more upon him, and to make sure work this time, not only dethroned but murdered him.

This valuable and learned work closes with a very able summary, or general view, of the condition of the Greeks at the extinction of the Roman power in the East. We would gladly lay a portion of this able sketch before our readers ; but having already quoted largely from the volume, we can only commend it, together with the remainder of Mr. Finlay's labors, to the attention of scholars.

ART. II. — 1. *Sancti Patris nostri Joannis Chrysostomi Opera Omnia.* Operâ et Studio D. BERNARDI DE MONTFAUCON. Editio altera, emendata et aucta. Parisiis. 1839.

2. *Homilies of St. Chrysostom.* Translated by Members of the English Church. Oxford. 1839 – 44. 9 vols. 8vo.

It is obvious that within the last fifteen or twenty years there has been a remarkable revival of a taste for the study of the Christian Fathers. The conspicuous places and high prices assigned to copies of their works in catalogues of old books, and the many reprints of them in various forms, from the complete editions issued at Paris and Leipsic down to the popular selections made at Oxford and even at New York, must convince every one that the saints of old are by no means forgotten in our bustling nineteenth century. In some quarters, indeed, the passion for Patristic lore may be carried so far as to become an infirmity, and more than once of late, Milton's strong rebuke has been quoted by the zealous antagonists of tradition : " Whatever time or the heedless hand of blind chance hath drawn from old to this present, in her huge drag-net, whether fish or sea-weed, shell or shrubs, unpicked, unchosen, these are the Fathers." Allow that the drag-net has brought up much worthless trash, we will not complain so long as it " hath drawn from old to this present " one prize laden with such precious matter as the works of the golden-mouthed John of Antioch and Constantinople. He was the most brilliant preacher of the ancient church in its palmy days, a man whose life will al-